

Reflections on an Urban Youth Farm

Rachel Brahinsky

SLUG's Youth Garden Internship (YGI) provides teenagers age 14-17 with paid employment while learning gardening and landscaping skills. The program, based at the 4.5 acre St. Mary's Urban Youth Farm on Alemany Boulevard, offers the chance to work year round, after

school, and on week-ends. This summer YGI teens built a pond, grew a wide variety of vegetables, and landscaped the entrance to the farm. After one harvest at the end of the summer, the teens went door-to-door in the Alemany Housing Development (adjacent to the Farm) distributing organic vegetables including potatoes, beans and lettuce to residents. This fall, youth interns planted winter vegetables including collards, bare-root strawberry plants and garlic. Visitors are welcome at the farm - come on by on a Saturday (9 a.m.-2 p.m.) to lend a hand and check out the results of the teens' hard work!

Throughout the program, SLUG staff asked teens to reflect upon their work. The following are excerpts from their writing.

"During the summer we were able to clear weeds, so more fruits and vegetables could be planted and used for food and to be used for compost. I learned how to lay landscaping paper and mulch around the tree basins and how to cultivate the vegetable area. I learned about horticultural

and how San Francisco used to be in the 1700's and what things remain from that time. We helped the community by giving them a nice place to grow plants and foods, and a nice place to relax in."

David Bualat, age 15



"I have helped the community by planting things to make the world look more beautiful. I think that when we finish the job I think that it is going to be a nice place for people to take walks in. I feel that it is a good job because it keeps people off the street."

Danesha McCoy, age 14

"I feel that this work is not easy at all but when I'm done with my job and I see the plants and how I helped them to get where they are and how much I've learned to take care of plants, that makes me proud of what I do and who I am."

Irma Sanchez, age 17

Rachel Brahinsky is the Youth Programs Coordinator at SLUG.

YGI interns proudly pose with the results of the summer's harvest - approximately 2,000 pounds of organic red, all blue and yellow fingerling potatoes! (John Caperton Photography)